SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

Saron's Mission: ***Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!!***

Reverend James E. Smith, Pastor
Cell: 269-816-3870
Email: pastorjames@saronlutheran.org

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll.marcus17@gmail.com

Beth Gray, Organist
Email: egrayroll@gmail.com

Ken Boyd, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Mackenzie Dressander, Nursery Director
Email: Mackenzie.trail99@gmail.com

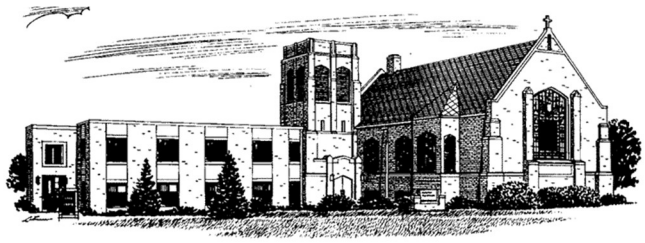
Typical Sunday at Saron:

Fall, Winter and Spring **(begins Sept 7, 2025):**
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am-10:30am Adult Bible Study
10am-10:45am Learning Hour for Ages 3-8th Grade
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer Schedule (**through Aug 31, 2025**):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Yehiel Curry,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas, Bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia



Praying for Our Leaders

At my last call at Trinity Episcopal Church in Three Rivers, we prayed every week during the Prayers of the People "for our President Donald, our Governor Gretchen, and our Mayor Tom." This politically eclectic petition was in direct response to Paul's letter to his young protégé pastor Timothy (heard in worship on 9/21), in which he writes:

> 1 TIM 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.

Now you might read this and say, "If only Paul knew our leaders today!" But in fact, Paul and the early Christians were actively persecuted for their religious and political beliefs—Paul wrote several letters from prison! He was not carrying the water for the emperor or other folks "in high positions"—he was martyred by them.

So why did he write this advice to Timothy? He says "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity." It may be hard for us to remember a time when our public life was any of those things. It often seems the loudest voices in our society have the most apocalyptic tone. Leadership sets the tone for the rest of us. So even when I disagree with, or, indeed, can't stand, the leader, wouldn't I still want to pray that God re-forms them?

Second, our prayer may not be all about *them*. Paul shows us that Christians can lead lives that are quiet, peaceable, godly, and dignified even when the rest of the world is losing its mind. When I pray for someone, I am *grounded*. I am less likely to heap fuel on an inferno and more likely to act out of the fruit of the Spirit: love, kindness, goodness, self-control, peacefulness, gentleness: you get the picture.

Finally, we pray for our leaders and for our enemies because no matter how fallen they or we are, Christians believe that there is some image of God in them, and we pray that God would enlarge it. Prayer is the antidote to hopeless violence that assumes that the only way to fix a bad person (in our eyes) is to erase them. Prayer is an act of faith that all people can change: even our enemies, even ourselves.

Yours in Christ, Pastor James

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor James E. Smith
Monday – Thursday
Hours may vary. Appointments are great!
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 10am-2pm
Ken Boyd (Bookkeeper):
Thursday Mornings and by Appointment
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)

If you or your loved one is need of a visit or pastoral care, please contact Pastor James at 269-816-3870.

Specific questions or concerns may be directed to an appropriate council member or committee liaison:
President – Fran Bolson
Vice President – Erik Bergh
Secretary – Claudia Staude
Treasurer – Ed Brunner
Worship – Marilyn Frey
Learning – Fran Bolson or Scott Gaspari
Outreach – Jim Manore
Facilities – Steve Cook or Ed Brunner
Youth – Chuck Knebl
Support – Jim Manore or Ed Brunner
Hospitality – Merrily Smith or Claudia Staude

Caring and Sharing

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

10/1 Katie Kroening
10/2 Steven Cook
10/2 Judy Wedde
10/4 Mary Kynast
10/7 Amy Nelson
10/10 Calvin Wallace
10/12 Andrew Olson
10/13 Kerrie Hoodlebrink
10/14 Mark Bergh
10/14 Pauline Ngonyani
10/15 Elias Coar
10/17 Savannah Talbert
10/18 Katherine Ulrey
10/20 Keith Stevens
10/20 Freyja Danielsky
10/21 Evan Streufert-Wold
10/22 Laura Brunner
10/26 Amanda Bradley
10/26 Gary Cowall
10/27 Andrew Danielsky
10/30 Emmie Carter
10/31 Ivan Kiessel

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

10/13 Sue & Dave Bailey

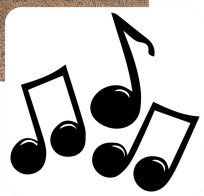
If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

CONGRATULATIONS IRMA GORMAN!

September 21, 2025

Irma chose her last official Sunday to coincide with the 150th Anniversary Celebratory Worship on August 10. We chose to give her a less busy day for her own celebration. Saron thanks you, Irma, for your many years of service in the role of organist/pianist. Your playing brought the building to life and enhanced our worship experience.

Duet with daughter, Lorelei



Worship

ASSISTED HEARING DEVICES

Our sound system in the sanctuary came with headphones to assist those having difficulty hearing the worship service. If you are interested, ask Marcus if you can try one out.

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we have Sensory Bags available for use. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your concerns or thanksgivings via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made online via a link in our Thursday email. You may include as much, or little, detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are invited to be part of this Monday group at 11am.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. **Flowers are now $40 per vase.** Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then please **return the vase.**

Nursery service is available during worship for children under five years old (exceptions are made, especially for siblings). There is a live-feed monitor in the nursery where you may keep up with the service if you need to stay with your child. For children five and older, there are options to bring into the sanctuary, such as clipboards with coloring pages, sensory bags (see article above) and children's bulletins. If you need to step out with them to regroup, there are quiet activities in a bin next to the sofa in the narthex. We embrace family units in all stages and welcome wiggles & giggles as a part of worship.

We recognize the worship experience for families may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions with Marilyn Lucy (269-759-3464). Please also contact her if you are willing to volunteer to support this important service.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

October 5: 17th Sunday after Pentecost
Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4
Psalm 37:1-9
2 Timothy 1:1-14
Luke 17:5-10

October 12: 18th Sunday after Pentecost
2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15
Psalm 111
2 Timothy 2:8-15
Luke 17:11-19

October 19: 19th Sunday after Pentecost
Genesis 32:22-31
Psalm 121
2 Timothy 3:14—4:5
Luke 18:1-8

October 26: Reformation Sunday
Sirach 35:12-17
Psalm 84:1-7
2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18
Luke 18:9-14

Youth Group (middle school & high school age) is still trying to work out a schedule for meetings that will work for our busy students/athletes/artists.

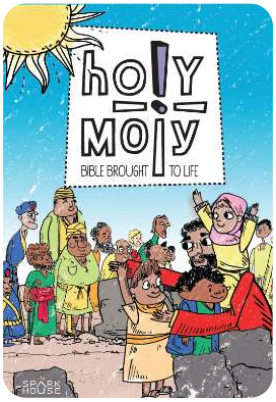
Contact Chuck Knebl at chasknebl@comcast.net with any questions or to be added to the email list.

Learning

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

The Learning Hour offers the following options:

- 9:40am-10:30am Adult Forum: High School - Adult
- 10am-10:45am Confirmation: Grades 6-8
- 10am-10:45am Sunday School: Preschool - Grade 5
    - New Classroom!
    - New Curriculum!
    - Make New Friends!
    - **Save the Date**: Children's Christmas Pageant on December 14!

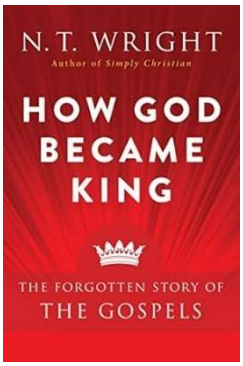


WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Acts of Faith: Tongues of fire, a *Treasure Island*-style sea voyage, Paul's preaching literally boring a man to death: the book of Acts is a feast of the works of the Holy Spirit! Come join our Wednesday morning Bible study as we explore this "act"ion-packed book, every Wednesday at 9:30am in the upstairs lounge. No special materials needed. Come when you can! Contact Pastor James with questions.

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

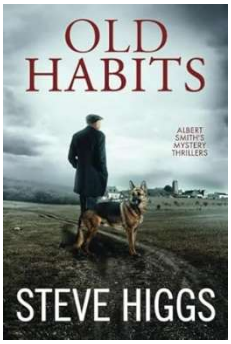
Getting the Gospels Wright: Have we been misreading the key themes of the New Testament for hundreds of years? What would it look like to read the story of Jesus through a new lens? Our Tuesday night Bible study will do just that as we read and discuss N.T. Wright's *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels,* every Tuesday at 6pm in the upstairs lounge. We meet for one hour of discussion, then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. All are welcome!



If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Don Hafer (269/985-3637, haferdon@gmail.com)
Ed Staude (636/288-1016, staude.edmund@gmail.com)
Eric Standen (269/759-3556, dande-standen@sbcglobal.net)
Pr. James (269/816-3870, pastorjames@saronlutheran.org)

We are ready to go again on **October 5 at 6:30pm in the upstairs lounge with *The Darwin Conspiracy* by John Darnton.** This historical fiction transports us to Victorian England and around the world to reveal the secrets of the legendary nineteenth-century figure. Darnton blends the power of fact and insights of fiction to explore the many mysteries attached to the life and work of Charles Darwin.

Then get ready for ***Old Habits* by Steve Higgs, on November 2.** "*It's like Jack Reacher at eighty---with a dog. Fast-paced suspense and edge-of-your-seats-thrills*." (Amazon) Dirk DeGraff has kept his deadly secret for twenty-three years. Not one person knows.



Until today. Sounds intriguing. Come join us for some good discussions and fellowship. All are welcome for any or all meetings.

Questions? Call Kathy Cowall (269)428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

A Classic - a book which people praise but don't read.

-Mark Twain

Sunday, September 28, at 6:30, we will conclude our session on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. You need not have attended the first session to be able to participate, and there is no preparation on your part. We will be starting at the 1947 UN Declaration, basically the beginning of the 'modern' troubles. Bring a friend, there's always room.

Sundays, October 12 & 26 are the gathering times for the month of October. We'll meet at 6:30 in the upstairs lounge. The speaker details for October 12 are still being finalized so watch the weekly email blast and Sunday bulletin for an update. BUT, here's a question for you. Have you ever been to Africa? What would it be like to see Mt. Kilimanjaro, or to go on a safari? Join us on October 26 and find out. Jim Manore was recently there and will be sharing his experiences with us. Come ready to be inspired to make your own adventure. Bring a friend or future travel partner!

Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

We will meet at 7pm on Wednesday, October 8 in the upstairs lounge. Denise will provide Zoom. That link will be emailed close to the meeting date. Study lesson information will also be emailed. Linda Pater will lead the study.

Contact Melanie at 269/449-8399 with any questions.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

We would love to have snack time outside in the courtyard during September! We just need some hosts!

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship after the service? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for at least 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering (and those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

THE BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN™ HEART-TO-HEART™

Simple food, honestly sourced and lovingly made creates connections, gives fuel to the fight, and starves ignorance and apathy.

-Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen

On August 28, Jim Manore, Sue Harris, Cindy Brown, and Dave & Kathie Bradley assembled and delivered 150 sack lunches to the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen. The lunches included a sandwich, chips, fruit and cookies baked by Sue Harris, Mary Lou Giguere, Marilyn Lucy and Sally Schmuhl. The Soup Kitchen has recently purchased the former Lark's BBQ on Main Street in Benton Harbor. During the extensive renovation, Saron will be assembling sack lunches at Red Lotus Nutrition and delivering them to the Soup Kitchen to be distributed. We would like to thank Red Lotus for allowing us to pack the lunches in their commercial kitchen.

Before the move, we were providing 80 lunches. Recently, we've been assembling 150 lunches! **Because of the increase in community need, we also require more people to provide cookies.** If you are able to help by assembling lunches or providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

Lions RECYCLE For Sight

Do you have old glasses sitting in a drawer? Lions Club has provided a collection box in the narthex. We have several members who are Lions that can deliver our glasses to the club where they will do more good. Thank you!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Lindsay Gaspari: 847/373-8826 | lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com
Meredith Gacek: 269/235-4530 | meredithgacek@yahoo.com

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

Sunday, 3:00 PM

Celebration of the Harvest and Harvesters

Tabor Hill Vineyard Tent
333 Mount Tabor Rd. Buchanan, MI

Oct 5 2025

Sponsored By: Interfaith Action

We've already provided some items to help see our migrant population through the summer (thank you!) but we would love to send more items the day of the event. This is the list provided: **dry pinto & black beans, white rice, bar soap, sunglasses, sunscreen, shampoo, men's t-shirts & long-sleeve shirts (S,M), towels, blankets, and baseball caps.** Let's show our support of our migrant neighbors!

Support

The Support Committee typically meets the Tuesday before the third Monday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with a brokerage firm to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Ed Brunner at ebrunner54@gmail.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands!

Miscellaneous Bits of News

Saron Lutheran Church
1875 | 150th Anniversary | 2025

UPDATE ON PRAYER & MEDITATION GARDEN

We will be having a celebration & dedication of all we've accomplished so far after the 11am worship on **October 12.** This will include the prayer nook with some new landscaping, an indestructable picnic table and a matching trash receptacle. We are on our way to making our green space a peaceful spot for the community!

Future plans for the space includes installing an outdoor prayer station (might be done in time), relocating the Japanese maple to a new spot in the ground (the current above ground planter is rotting), elemental sculptures and signage to encourage the community to enjoy the space and reinforce our welcome to all.

The extent of our work on the Community Prayer & Meditation Garden is directly tied to the funds we collect. If you would like to contribute, make sure your donation is marked "Prayer Garden."

Outreach 2025

Lutheran World Relief

Saron Church Women will again be collecting items for Lutheran World Relief (LWR) which distributes items all over the world wherever they are needed. Donation opportunities from the congregation will include “Personal Care Kits”, “Fabric Kits”, and also cash donations for shipping costs.

We will distribute plastic resealable kit bags beginning Sunday, September 14. **Kits will be due on Sunday, October 5.** You may bring completed kits anytime during that timeframe and deposit them in labeled boxes in the narthex. Please do not add other items or omit any of the items listed. All items should be new and in good condition.

A personal care kit has one light-weight bath towel (dark color recommended), two bath-size bars of soap, one adult-size toothbrush, one sturdy comb, and one metal nail clipper.

A fabric kit has 2-4 yards of cloth and matching thread.

Shipping cost donations will also be welcome. Donations can be cash or a check made payable to Saron Church Women with “LWR shipping costs” as the memo. These donations may be given to Colleen Lundgren, Denise Cook, or Melanie McCammon.

Thank you very much in advance for your generosity in supporting this ministry!

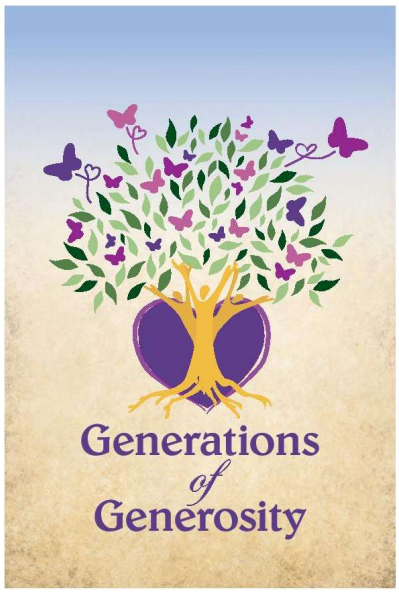
Results of Last Year’s LWR Kit Drive:

- **Over 127,600 Personal Care Kits were collected with most of them going to Ukraine, Peru, Angola and Turkey.**
- **9,270 Personal Care Kits remained in the United States for people in need right here.**
- **Over 5,500 Fabric Kits were collected with most of them being sent to Angola, Peru and Lebanon.**

THANK YOU!

Fall 2025 Stewardship Season

Saron's annual Stewardship Season officially kicked off on Sept 21st with a delightful service – we hope you enjoyed it! – and is now in full swing! Over the next few weeks, you can look forward to:



Exploring the "Principles of Christian Stewardship"

Sunday, Sept 28	Ownership	Scott Gaspari
Sunday, Oct 5	Responsibility	Colleen Lundgren
Sunday, Oct 12	Accountability	Erik Bergh
Sunday, Oct 19	Reward	David VanDenburgh

Viewing short videos highlighting important aspects of stewardship

Thurs, Sept 18	Worship	Pastor James
Thurs, Sept 25	Prayer & Meditation	Connie Slater
Thurs, Oct 2	Service & Learning	Kristen Harper
Thurs, Oct 9	Care of God's Creation	Chuck Knebl
Thurs, Oct 16	Church Life at Saron	Ted Dosch
Thurs, Oct 23	Commitment	Don Hafer

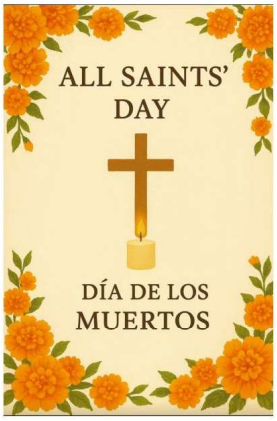
Día de Los Muertos

Día de los Muertos, the Day of the Dead, is a multi-day holiday traditionally celebrated Nov 1-2, though other days may be included depending on the locality. The holiday involves family and friends gathering to pay respects and remember friends and family members who have died. A tradition widely observed in Mexico, the celebrations often take a humorous tone, as celebrants remember amusing events and anecdotes about the departed.

The observance of *Día de los Muertos* falls during the Christian season Allhallowtide, a three-day period that encompasses All Hallows' Eve, All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day. While some argue that Indigenous Mexican or ancient Aztec influences account for the *Día de los Muertos* custom, others see it as a local expression of the Allhallowtide season that was long ago brought to the region by Spanish Christians.

We elected to endorse the latter interpretation and will use the occasion, albeit a week or so early, to honor all previous generations at Saron. And, oh, did we mention that the celebrations typically include great Mexican food?

And then we reach this year's finale on Sunday, Oct 26th, with the Celebration of Commitments. Fran Bolson will provide a short temple talk focused on commitment, we'll all deliver (or symbolically deliver) our commitment forms and Time & Talent surveys, and then enjoy a sumptuous *Día de Los Muertos* feast of Mexican treats to honor all previous generations that worshiped at Saron.



Stewardship season provides an annual reminder of what Saron means to each of us, to the congregation as a whole, to the community, and to the worldwide church. Yes, the gifts of time, talents, and treasures that we offer in response to what God has done for us really do make a difference – at Saron, in our community, and throughout the world. Please be generous!

You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.
(2 Corinthians 9:11)

Stewardship is what we do after we say we believe

OCTOBER 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**2** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**3**	**4**
5 8:30am Worship 9:40am Adult Learning Hour 10am Youth Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option 6:30pm Book Club	**6** 11am Prayer Group	**7** 6pm Bible Study	**8** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study 7pm Deborah Circle	**9** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**10**	**11**
12 8:30am Worship 9:40am Adult Learning Hour 10am Youth Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option 12:15pm Garden Dedication 6:30pm Forum & Fellowship	**13** 11am Prayer Group	**14** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**15** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**16** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**17**	**18**
19 8:30am Worship 9:40am Adult Learning Hour 10am Youth Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**20** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting **Newsletter Articles Due**	**21** 6pm Bible Study	**22** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**23** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **SOUP KITCHEN**	**24**	**25**
26 Commitment Sunday 8:30am Worship 9:40am Adult Learning Hour 10am Youth Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option 12:15pm Stewardship Celebration 6:30pm Forum & Fellowship	**27** 11am Prayer Group	**28** 6pm Bible Study	**29** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**30**	**31**	

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

OCTOBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

September 7, 2025